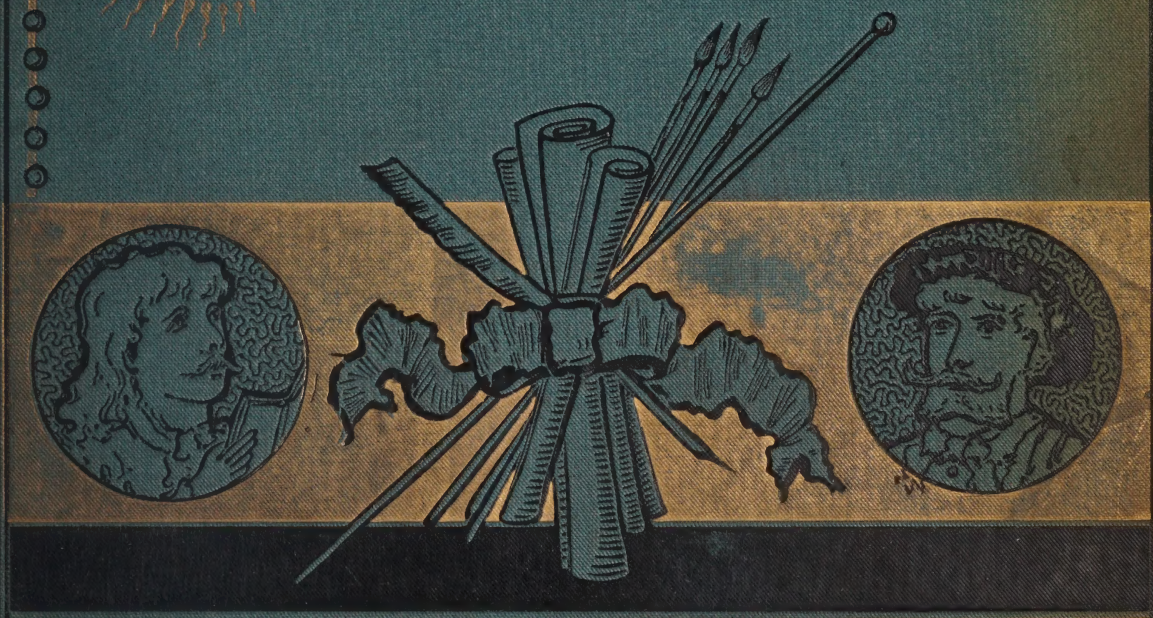
# IDEAL POEMS



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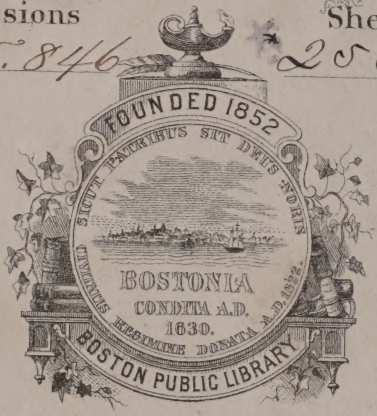


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I MOVE THE SWEET FORGET-ME-NOTS
THAT GROW FOR HAPPY LOVERS.

# IDEAL POEMS

## FROM THE ENGLISH POETS

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ILLUSTRATIONS BY
AMERICAN ARTISTS

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Oct. 8, 1883

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# IDEAL POEMS.

## THE BROOK.

I COME from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses:

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

## THE THREE FISHERS.

THREE fishers went sailing away to the West—
Away to the West as the sun went down;
Each thought on the woman who loved him best,
And the children stood watching them out of the town;
For men must work and women must weep;
And there's little to earn and many to keep,
Though the harbor-bar be moaning.

Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower
And trimmed the lamps as the sun went down;
They looked at the squall, and they looked at the shower,
And the night-rack came rolling up ragged and brown.
But men must work and women must weep,
Though storms be sudden and waters deep,
And the harbor-bar be moaning.

FOR MEN MUST WORK, AND WOMEN MUST WEEP.

Three corpses lay out on the shining sands
In the morning gleam as the tide went down,
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands
For those who will never come back to the town;
For men must work and women must weep —
And the sooner it's over the sooner to sleep —
And good-by to the bar and its moaning.

## THE LONG WHITE SEAM.

AS I came round the harbor buoy
The lights began to gleam;
No wave the land-locked water stirred,
The crags were white as cream.
And I marked my love by candle light
Sewing her long white seam.
It's ay sewing ashore, my dear,
Watch and steer at sea —
It's reef and furl, and haul the line,
Set sail and think of thee.

I climbed to reach her cottage door;
Oh, sweetly my love sings!
Like a shaft of light her voice breaks forth;
My soul to meet it springs
As the shining water leaped of old
When stirred by angel wings.
Ay, longing to list anew,
Awake and in my dream,
But never a song she sang like this,
Sewing her long white seam.

BY THE CANDLE'S FLICKERING GLEAM.

Fair fall the lights, the harbor lights,
That brought me in to thee,
And peace drop down on that low roof
For the sight that I did see,
And the voice, my dear, that rang so clear
All for the love of me.
For oh, for oh, with brows bent low,
By the candle's flickering gleam,
Her wedding-gown it was she wrought,
Sewing the long white seam.

## O MAY I JOIN THE CHOIR INVISIBLE!

O MAY I join the choir invisible
Of those immortal dead who live again
In minds made better by their presence; live
In pulses stirred to generosity,
In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
Of miserable aims that end with self,
In thoughts sublime that pierce the night like stars,
And with their mild persistence urge men's minds
To vaster issues.

So to live is heaven:
To make undying music in the world,
Breathing a beauteous order that controls
With growing sway the growing life of man.
So we inherit that sweet purity
For which we struggled, failed and agonized
With widening retrospect that bred despair.
Rebellious flesh that would not be subdued,
A vicious parent shaming still its child,
Poor, anxious penitence is quick dissolved;

"MAY I REACH THAT PUREST HEAVEN!"

Its discords, quenched by meeting harmonies,
Die in the large and charitable air;
And all our rarer, better, truer self,
That sobbed religiously in yearning song,
That watched to ease the burden of the world,
Laboriously tracing what must be,
And what may yet be better — saw rather
A worthier image for the sanctuary
And shaped it forth before the multitude,
Divinely human, raising worship so
To higher reverence more mixed with love —
That better self shall live till human Time
Shall fold its eyelids, and the human sky
Be gathered like a scroll within the tomb
Unread forever.

This is life to come,
Which martyred men have made more glorious
For us who strive to follow.

May I reach
That purest heaven — be to other souls
The cup of strength in some great agony,
Enkindle generous ardor, feed pure love,

Beget the smiles that have no cruelty,
Be the sweet presence of a good diffused,
And in diffusion ever more intense!
So shall I join the choir invisible
Whose music is the gladness of the world.

## HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris and he:
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
"Good speed!" cried the watch as the gate-bolts undrew,
"Speed!" echoed the wall to us galloping through.
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace—
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the check-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'Twas moonset at starting; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
At Boom a great yellow star came out to see;

At Düffeld 'twas morning as plain as could be;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
chime —
So Joris broke silence with "Yet there is time!"

At Aerschot up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one,
To stare through the mist at us galloping past;
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray;

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear
bent back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track,
And one eye's black intelligence — ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance;
And the thick heavy spume-flakes, which aye and
anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay
spur!
Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her;
We'll remember at Aix" — for one heard the quick
wheeze

AT AERSCHOT UP LEAPED OF A SUDDEN THE SUN.

Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh;
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like
chaff;
Till over by Delhem a dome spire sprung white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment
his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her
fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buff-coat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet name, my horse without
peer —

Clapped my hands, laughed and sung, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is friends flocking around,
As I sate with his head twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from Ghent.

## MOTHER AND POET.

DEAD! one of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the feast
And are wanting a great song for Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art for a woman, men said,
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized here,
The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her head
Forever instead.

What art can woman be good at? Oh, vain!
What art *is* she good at, but hurting her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain?
Ah, boys, how you hurt! you were strong as you pressed,
And *I* proud by that test.

What's art for a woman? To hold on her knees
Both darlings! to feel all their arms round her throat
Cling, strangle a little! To sew by degrees,
And 'broider the long clothes and neat little coat!
To dream and to dote.

To teach them . . . It stings there. *I* made them indeed
Speak plain the word 'country.' I taught them, no doubt,
That a country's a thing men should die for at need.
*I* prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant turned out.

And when their eyes flashed, oh, my beautiful eyes!
I exulted! nay, let them go forth at the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not. But then the surprise,
When one sits quite alone! Then one weeps, then one kneels!
—God! how the house feels.

At first happy news came, in gay letters moiled
With my kisses, of camp-life and glory, and how

They both loved me, and soon, coming home to be
spoiled,
In return would fan off every fly from my brow
With their green laurel bough.

Then was triumph at Turin. 'Ancona was free!'
And some one came out of the cheers in the street,
With a face pale as stone to say something to me.
My Guido was dead! I fell down at his feet
While they cheered in the street.

I bore it — friends soothed me: my grief looked
sublime
As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained
To be leant on and walked with, recalling the time
When the first grew immortal, while both of us
strained
To the height he had gained.

And letters still came — shorter, sadder, more strong,
Writ now but in one hand. I was not to faint,
One loved me for two . . . would be with me ere
long,
And 'Viva Italia' *he* died for, our saint,
Who forbids our complaint.

My Nanni would add, 'he was safe and aware
Of a presence that turned off the balls . . . was
imprest
It was Guido himself, who knew what I could bear,
And how 'twas impossible, quite dispossessed,
To live on for the rest.'

On which, without pause, up the telegraph line,
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta — *Shot.*
*Tell his mother.* Ah, ah! 'his,' 'their' mother: not
'mine.'
No voice says '*my* mother' again to me. What!
You think Guido forgot?

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with Heaven,
They drop earth's affection, conceive not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven
Through that Love and Sorrow which reconciled so
The Above and Below.

O Christ of the seven wounds, who look'dst through
the dark
To the face of thy mother! consider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes
turned away,
And no last word to say!

DEAD! ONE OF THEM SHOT BY THE SEA IN THE EAST,
AND ONE OF THEM SHOT IN THE WEST BY THE SEA.

Both boys dead! but that's out of nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house must always keep one.
'Twere imbecile hewing out roads to a wall,
And when Italy's made, for what end is it done
If we have not a son?

Ah! ah! ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?
When the fair, wicked queen sits no more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?
When your guns of Cavalli, with final retort,
Have cut the game short —

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,
When your flag takes all Heaven for its white, green, and red,
When *you* have your country from mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,
(And I have my dead)

What then? Do not mock me! Ah, ring your bells low!
And burn your lights faintly. *My* country is there,
Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow.
*My* Italy's there — with my brave civic Pair,
To disfranchise despair.

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn,
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length
Into wail such as this! and we sit on forlorn
When the man-child is born.

Dead! one of them shot by the sea in the west!
And one of them shot in the east by the sea!
Both! both my boys! If, in keeping the feast,
You want a great song for your Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

## BINGEN ON THE RHINE.

A SOLDIER of the Legion lay dying in Algiers,
There was lack of woman's nursing, there was dearth of woman's tears;
But a comrade stood beside him while his life-blood ebbed away,
And bent with pitying glances to hear what he might say.
The dying soldier faltered, and he took that comrade's hand,
And he said, "I never more shall see my own, my native land;
Take a message, and a token to some distant friends of mine,
For I was born at Bingen, at Bingen on the Rhine.

"Tell my brothers and companions when they meet and crowd around
To hear my mournful story, in the pleasant vineyard ground,

That we fought the battle bravely, and when the day was done,
Full many a corse lay ghastly pale beneath the setting sun;
And, 'mid the dead and dying, were some grown old in wars,
The death-wound on their gallant breasts the last of many scars;
And some were young, and suddenly beheld life's morn decline,
And one had come from Bingen, fair Bingen on the Rhine.

"Tell my mother that her other son shall comfort her old age;
For I was still a truant bird that thought his home a cage.
For my father was a soldier, and even as a child
My heart leaped forth to hear him tell of struggles fierce and wild;
And when he died and left us to divide his scanty hoard
I let them take whate'er they would, but I kept my father's sword;

"TELL MY SISTER NOT TO WEEP FOR ME."

And with boyish love I hung it where the bright
light used to shine
On the cottage wall at Bingen, calm Bingen on the
Rhine.

"Tell my sister not to weep for me, and sob with
drooping head
When the troops come marching home again with
glad and gallant tread,
But to look upon them proudly, with a calm and
steadfast eye,
For her brother was a soldier, too, and not afraid to die;
And if a comrade seek her love, I ask her, in my
name,
To listen to him kindly, without regret or shame,
And to hang the old sword in its place (my father's
sword and mine),
For the honor of old Bingen, dear Bingen on the
Rhine.

"There's another, not a sister; in the happy days
gone by
You'd have know her by the merriment that spark-
led in her eye;
Too innocent for coquetry, too fond for idle scorning,

O, friend! I fear the lightest heart makes sometimes heaviest mourning.
Tell her the last night of my life (for ere the moon be risen
My body will be out of pain, my soul be out of prison),
I dreamed I stood with her, and saw the yellow sunlight shine
On the vine-clad hills of Bingen, fair Bingen on the Rhine.

"I saw the blue Rhine sweep along, I heard, or seemed to hear,
The German songs we used to sing in chorus sweet and clear;
And down the pleasant river, and up the slanting hill,
The echoing chorus sounded, through the evening calm and still;
And her glad blue eyes were on me, as we passed, with friendly talk,
Down many a path beloved of yore, and well remembered walk,
And her little hand lay lightly, confidingly, in mine,
But we'll meet no more at Bingen, loved Bingen on the Rhine."

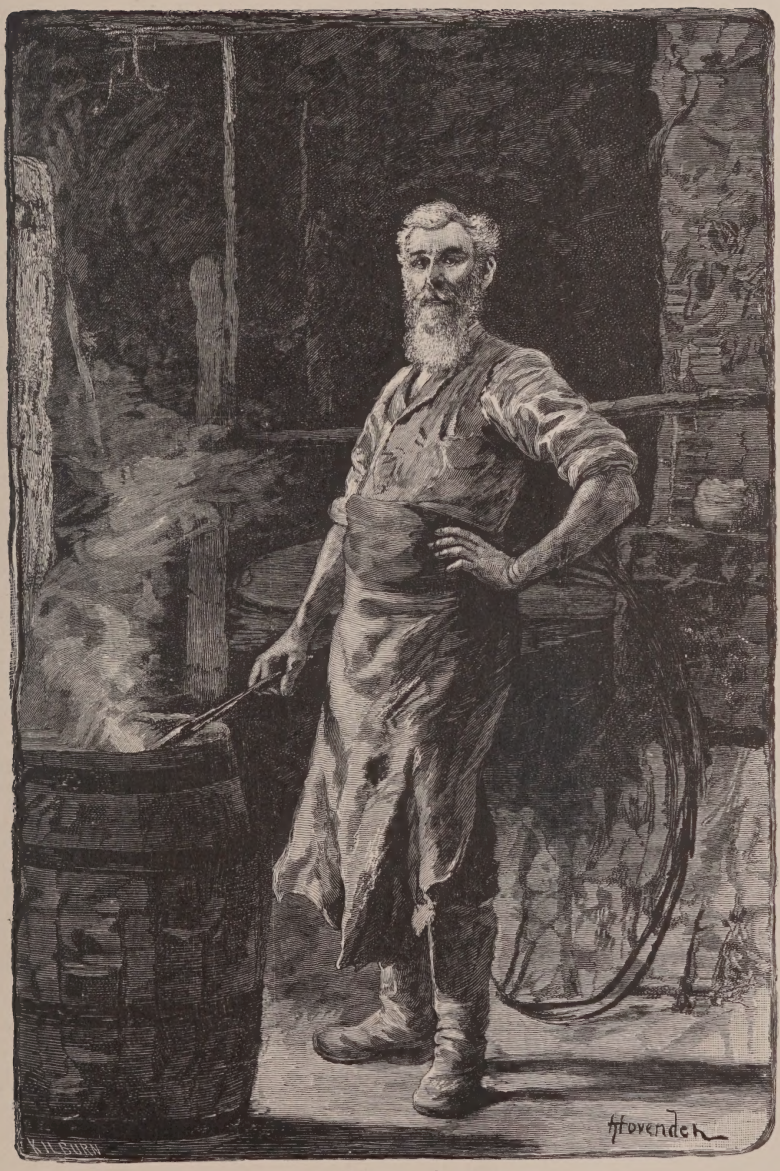
His trembling voice grew faint and hoarse, his grasp
was childish weak,
His eyes put on a dying look, he sighed, and ceased
to speak;
His comrade bent to lift him, but the spark of life
had fled,
The soldier of the Legion in a foreign land was dead;
And the soft moon rose up slowly, and calmly she
looked down
On the red sand of the battle-field with bloody corses
strown;
Yet calmly on that dreadful scene her pale light
seemed to shine,
As it shone on distant Bingen, fair Bingen on the
Rhine.

## A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT.

IS there, for honest poverty,
That hangs his head, and a' that?
The coward-slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toils obscure, and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea-stamp!
The man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hodden gray, and a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that.
For a' that, and a' that,
Their tinsel show, and a' that;
The honest man, though e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
Wha struts, and stares, and a' that;



A MAN FOR A' THAT.

Though hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
His rib and star, and a' that,
The man of independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,
Are higher ranks than a' that.

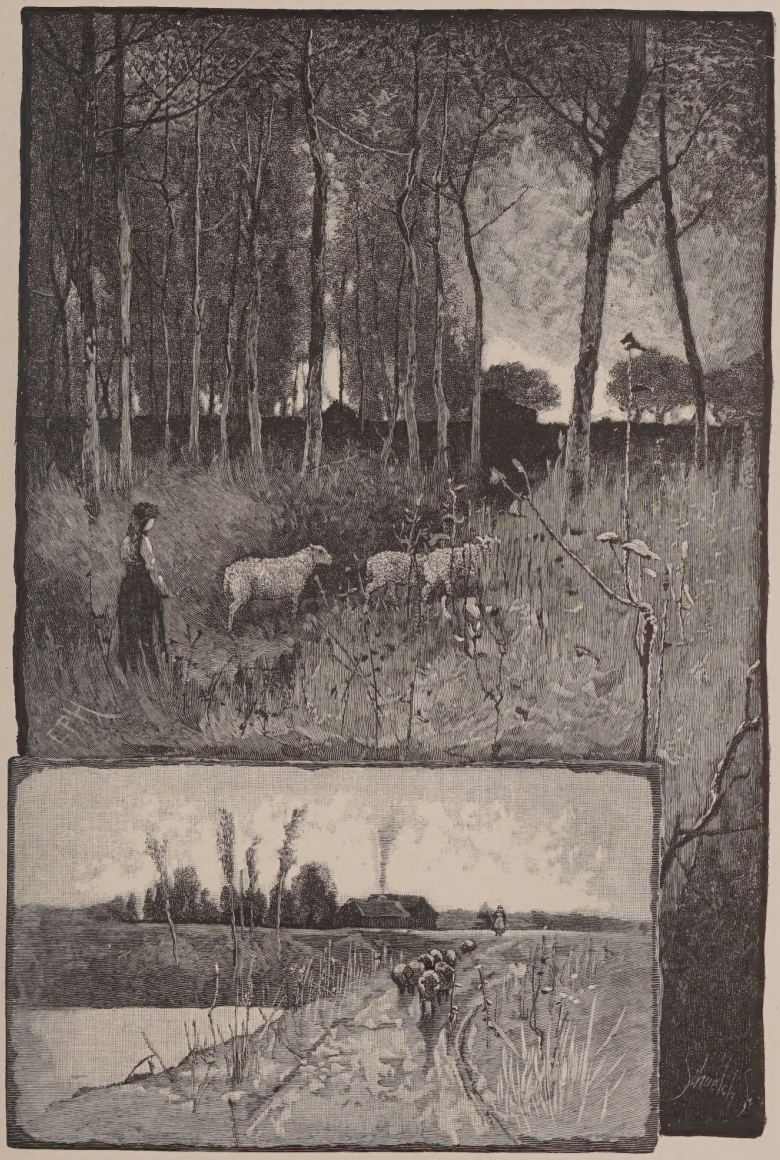
Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, and a' that;
For a' that, and a' that,
It's coming yet for a' that;
That man to man, the warld o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

## NATURE'S LADY.

THREE years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, "A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This child I to myself will take,
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

"Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The Girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

"She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm,
Of mute insensate things.



SHE SHALL BE SPORTIVE AS THE FAWN.

"The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willows bend;
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

"The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face."

## RING OUT, WILD BELLS.

RING out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light:
The year is dying in the night;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind
For those that here we see no more;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

RING OUT THE FALSE, RING IN THE TRUE.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
  The faithless coldness of the times;
  Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
  The civic slander and the spite;
  Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease;
  Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
  Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
  The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
  Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

## TO A SKYLARK.

HAIL to thee, blithe spirit —
Bird thou never wert —
That from heaven or near it
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire;
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds art bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight—

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see, we feel, that it is there.

All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
What is most like thee?
From rainbow-clouds there flow not
Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody:—

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not;

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love which overflows her bower;

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view;

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much heat these heavy-winged thieves;

THOU ART UNSEEN, BUT YET I HEAR THY SHRILL DELIGHT.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers —
All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh — thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal,
Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine, would be all
But an empty vaunt —
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of the happy strain?
What fields, or waves or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not;
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet, if we could scorn
Hate and pride and fear,
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then as I am listening now.

## THE LOST CHORD.

SEATED one day at the organ,
I was weary and ill at ease,
And my fingers wandered idly
Over the noisy keys.

I do not know what I was playing,
Or what I was dreaming then;
But I struck one chord of music
Like the sound of a great amen.

It flooded the crimson twilight
Like the close of an angel's psalm,
And it lay on my fevered spirit
With a touch of infinite calm.

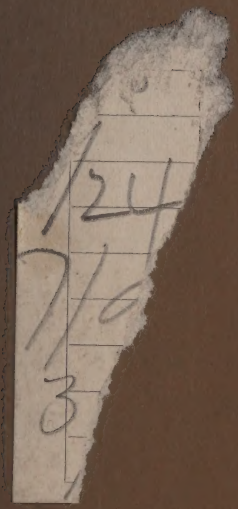
It quieted pain and sorrow,
Like love overcoming strife;
It seemed the harmonious echo
From our discordant life.

I DO NOT KNOW WHAT I WAS PLAYING,
OR WHAT I WAS DREAMING THEN.

It linked all perplexed meanings
  Into one perfect peace,
And trembled away into silence
  As if it were loath to cease.

I have sought, but I seek it vainly,
  That one lost chord divine,
That came from the soul of the organ
  And entered into mine.

It may be that death's bright angel
  Will speak in that chord again,
It may be that only in heaven
  I shall hear that grand amen.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